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G4A AUXF

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EP 0716386 A2 EP 0628920 A1 US 4789928 A

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(54) Auction bidding system

(57) A computer and audio-visual system for conducting an auction comprising: a user interface for an auction controller to enter bid information into said computer system during said auction; a visual display connected to said computer system for displaying at least a current bidding price during said auction.

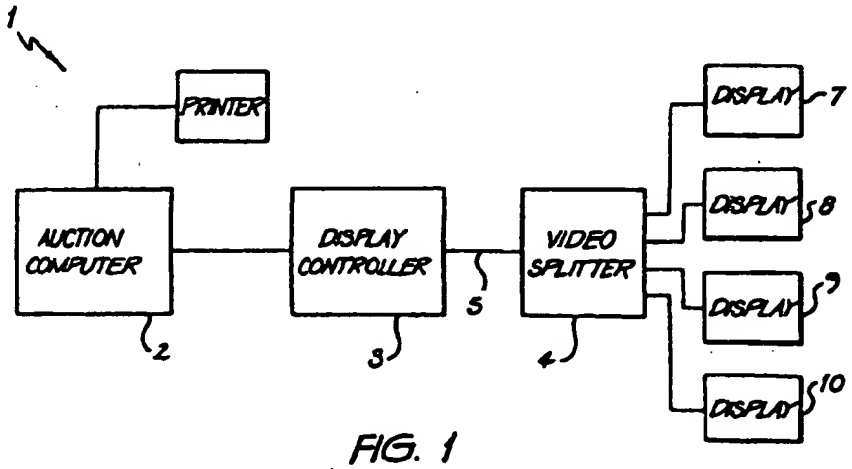

FIG. 1

GB 2 315 579

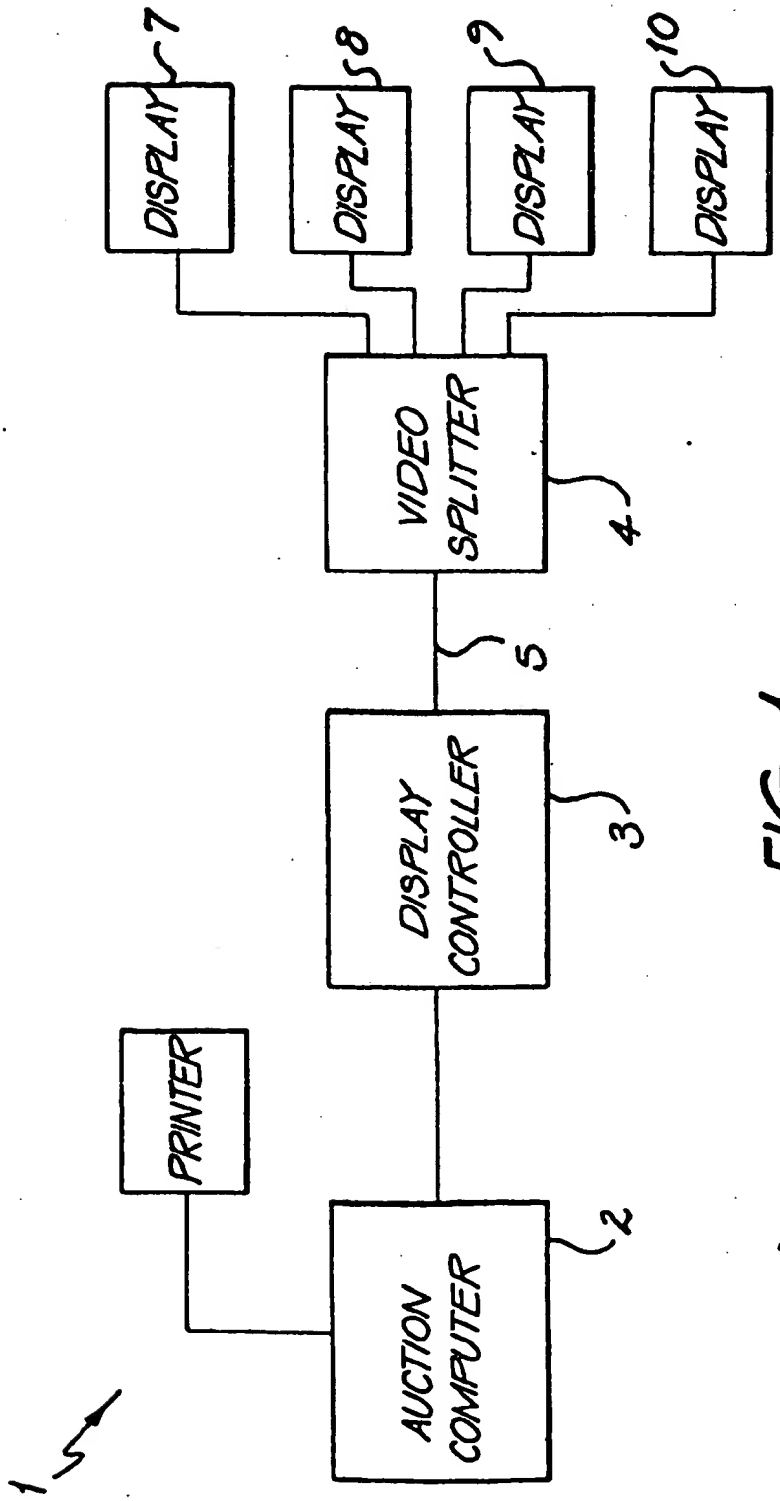
1
AUCTION COMPUTER
2
PRINTER
DISPLAY CONTROLLER
3
5
VIDEO SPLITTER
4
DISPLAY
7
DISPLAY
8
DISPLAY
9
DISPLAY
10

FIG. 1

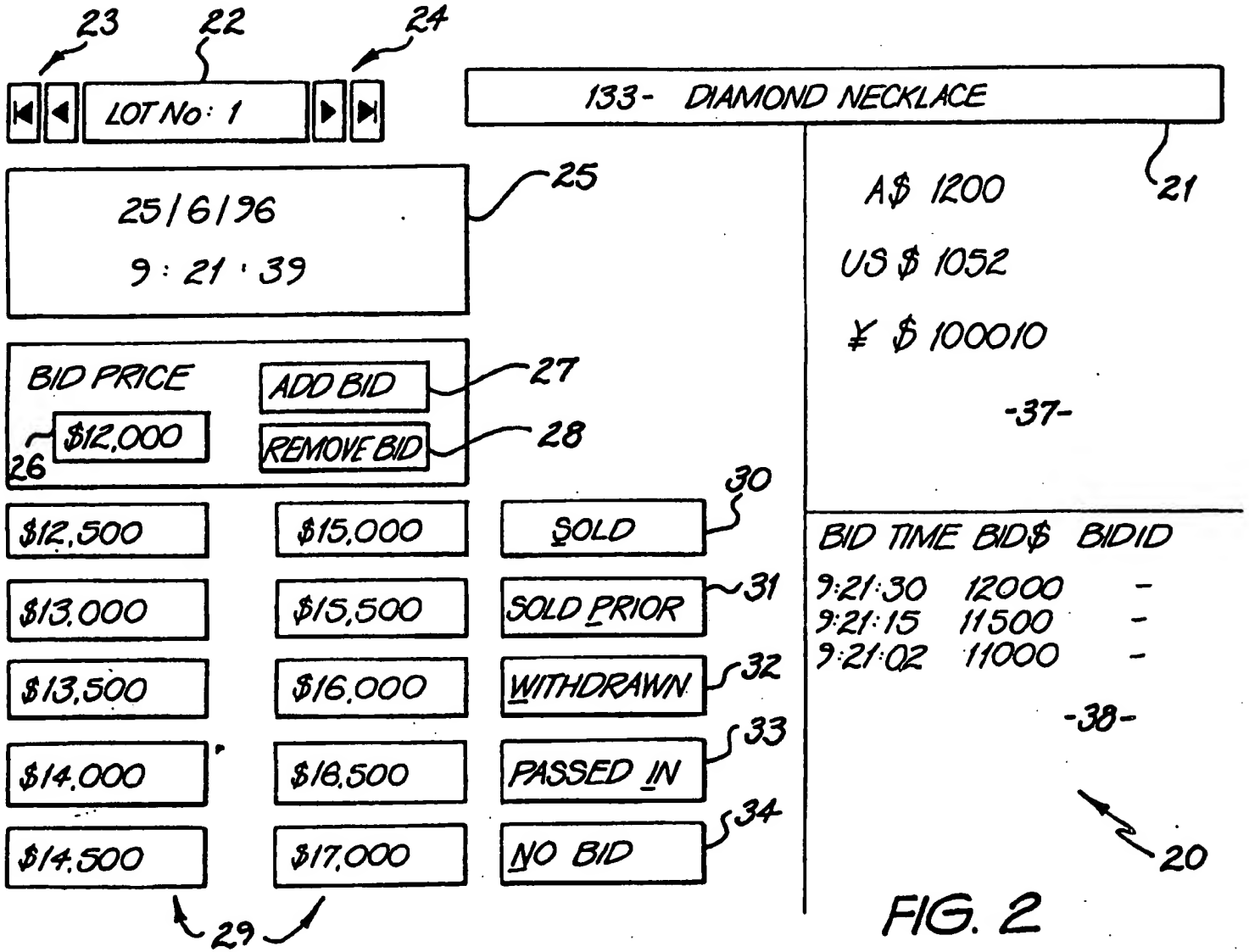
23
22
24
LOT No: 1
133- DIAMOND NECKLACE
25/6/96
9:21:39
25
A$ 1200
21
US $ 1052
¥ $ 100010
-37-
BID PRICE
ADD BID
27
$12,000
REMOVE BID
28
26
30
$12,500
$15,000
SOLD
$13,000
$15,500
SOLD PRIOR
31
$13,500
$16,000
WITHDRAWN
32
$14,000
$16,500
PASSED IN
33
$14,500
$17,000
NO BID
34
29
BID TIME BID$ BIDID
9:21:30 12000 -
9:21:15 11500 -
9:21:02 11000 -
-38-
20

FIG. 2

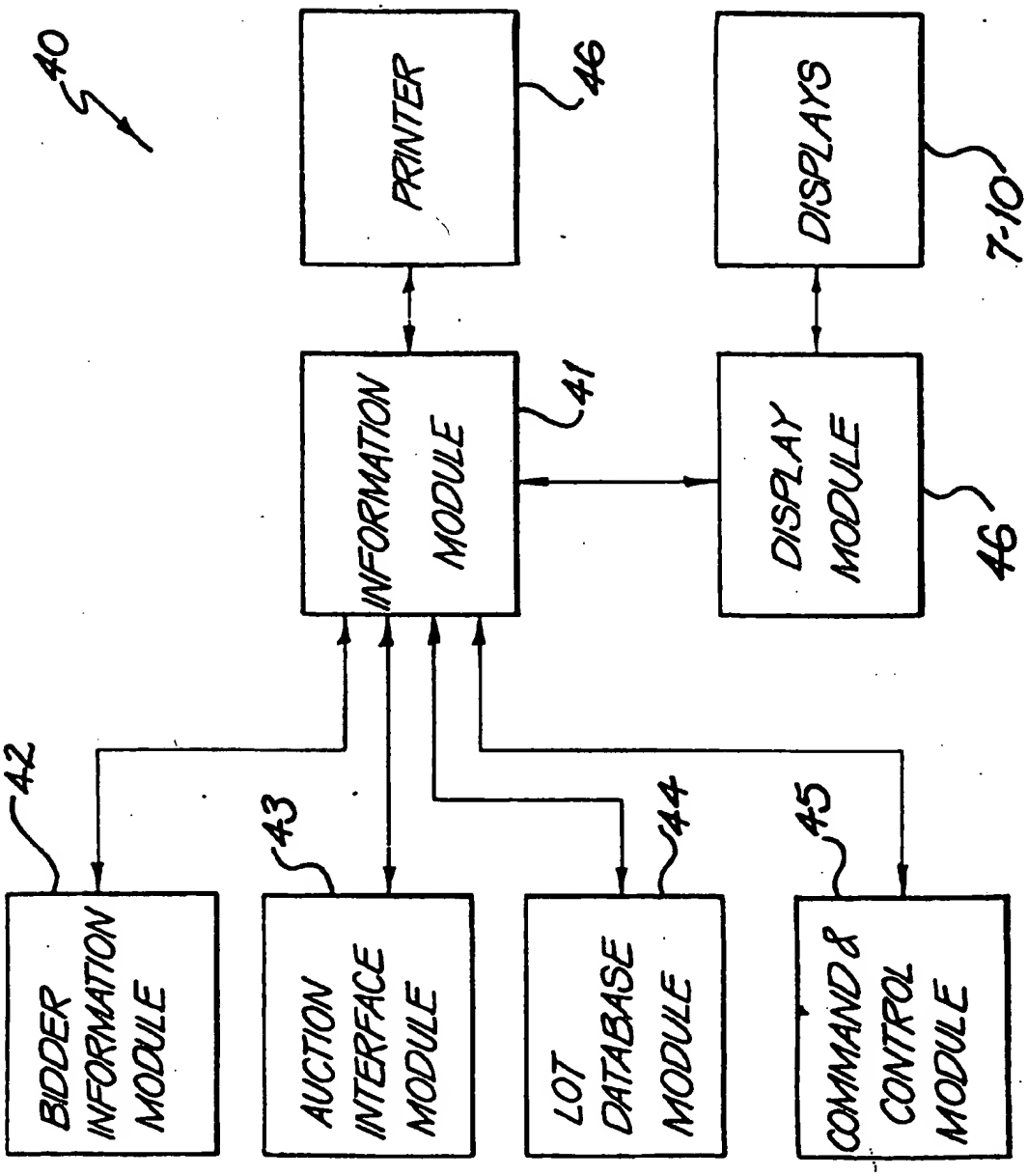
40
PRINTER
46
DISPLAYS
7-10
INFORMATION MODULE
41
DISPLAY MODULE
46
42
BIDDER INFORMATION MODULE
43
AUCTION INTERFACE MODULE
44
LOT DATABASE MODULE
45
COMMAND & CONTROL MODULE

FIG. 3

AUCTION BIDDING SYSTEM

The present invention relates to the auction process where a number of competing bidders are entitled to make bids for a particular object.

The traditional auction process is well known and usually involves an auctioneer taking bids from an audience or collection of competitive bidders. The auctioneer normally works on a commission on behalf of the seller and the seller's objective in any auction is to achieve the highest price for the particular object to be sold. The auction process is thought to have significant advantages for the seller due to the psychological effects or excitement generated in the competitive bidding process. Hence, it is often auctioneer's job to talk up or add as much to the excitement as possible and to create an general state of heightened expectations such that the bidders will bid tc a price which is often higher than they would otherwise bid in a considered and lengthy buying process.

However, the traditional bidding process has a number of significant disadvantages. Firstly, mistakes are often made in determining who has bid to a certain price, with stories of people effectively bidding against themselves being quite prevalent in the auctioning industry. Further, the buyers are often at a disadvantage if, for example, they fail to fully comprehend an auctioneer's diction, due to language problems on behalf of both the auctioneer and buyer and due to the speed with which an auction may be taking place. Further, buyers may be located in multiple geographical positions and may be working in multiple different currencies while the auction generally takes place in one currency. In such a situation, such disadvantaged buyers must first convert from the auctioneer's currency to their own before determining the value of a particular bid. Given that, in some auctions, time is of the essence, these individuals are at a substantial disadvantage when two bidders are competing for a bid at the same price.

It is an object of the present invention to provide for an improved auction bidding system which overcomes at least some of the disadvantages as mentioned in the prior art.

In accordance with an aspect of the present invention there is provided a computer and audio-visual system for conducting an auction comprising:

a user interface for an auction controller to enter bid information into said computer system during said auction;

a visual display connected to said computer system for displaying at least a current bidding price during said auction.

Notwithstanding any other forms which may fall within the scope of the present invention, preferred forms of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig.1 illustrates an arrangement of a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a graphical user interface illustration of the operation of the preferred embodiment; and

Fig. 3 is a schematic illustration of a possible software design for utilisation with the preferred embodiment.

Referring now to fig. 1, the preferred embodiment 1, is substantially based around an auction computer 2 which can comprise a high end PC type computer running a common operating system such as Microsoft Dos, Windows 95, Windows NT, Windows 3.1, (Trade Mark), Unix with one of the many graphical user interfaces such as X windows, Open Look (Trade Mark), or the like. In addition to displaying information on the usual display associated with the PC type computer 2, the auction computer 2 contains a display controller card 3 for independently controlling a separate display, the separate display effectively being under the control of auction computer 2 via display controller 3. The output of display controller 3 is connected to a video splitting device 4 which takes a video output 5 of display

controller 3 and outputs multiple signals for displays 7-10 which each display the same information as will become more readily apparent hereinafter. In an auction room environment, the auction computer 2 is preferably conveniently located for the personal control of the auctioneer and the displays 7-10 are located for viewing by the requisite auction audience.

Referring now to fig. 2, there is illustrated a user interface 20 suitable for use with the preferred embodiment, the user interface 20 being illustrated in schematic form only. It will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art of computer graphics and computer programming of graphical user interfaces, that the user interface 20 can be readily implemented in a number of different graphical user interfaces (GUI).

The item to be auctioned is denoted 21 at the top of the proposed interface 20. It is assumed that the auction contains a number of items and a lot number display 22 and controls 23, 24 are provided in the usual manner to move within the database of lot numbers.

Time and date information is further provided 25 for the easy observance by the auctioneer.

A current bid price is provided 26 and buttons 27, 28 are provided for adding bid prices or removing bid prices and generally making bid corrections. A series of buttons 29 are provided before activation by the auctioneer when receiving a bid from a member of the bidding audience. Upon receipt of each bid, these buttons can be updated with figures corresponding to expected future bidding prices. When a lot is sold, a sold button 30 can be activated thereby causing the auction computer records to be updated to reflect the fact that the lot has been sold. Further buttons 31-34 can be provided for activation upon the happening of certain auction events including lots sold prior to auction 31, lots withdrawn from the auction 32, lots passed in below a reserve 33 and lots when no bid is

received 34.

It would be understood by those skilled in the art that user interface 20 can be utilised in a number of different ways including, most commonly, by utilisation of a mouse and keyboard. Alternatively, a touch sensitive screen could be provided.

Importantly, during the auction process, as bids are being taken, a window 37 displays the current price of the bid in number of different currencies. The contents of window 37 within user interface 20 is also replicated, via auction computer 2, display controller 3 and video splitter 4 on each of the displays 7-10. Hence, potential bidders are able to instantly see the current bid price in a currency in which they are most familiar. Further, it is not necessary for them to be able to substantially decipher the auctioneer's audio explanation of the bidding process as the information contained within window 37 is generally sufficient.

Further, there is preferably provided a separate window 38 within user interface 20 illustrating the bidding history for this particular lot. This aids in post auction analysis of how the auction has progressed.

Of course, many refinements or alternative arrangements of the user interface 30 could be envisaged. For example, entry of bidders identification details with each bid could also be of importance and hence a separate window could be provided containing the relevant buttons for bidders active in a particular lot auction.

Additionally, a separate user interface (not shown) can be provided for entering in lot database information for a particular auction. Further, a controller user interface can be provided for controlling the whole bidding system and which can in turn allow access to interface 20 provided the party wishing to gain access has the relevant permission etc. This controller interface can include such things as the ability to edit lot information, bidder information, to

print summary lot and auction reports and to print various other reports as required.

It will be further apparent that the user interface and auction bidding system described can be implemented in software in a number of different ways.

Referring now to fig. 3, there is illustrated 40, in schematic form, one possible software design for the auction system of the preferred embodiment. The proposed system 40 is based around an information module 41 which can comprise a database of information about the lots and bidders within an auction in addition to the relevant exchange rate details. This module 41 can be accessed by, firstly, a bidder information module 42 which comprises a user interface for accessing details of bidders. The operation of the user interface within bidder information module 42 results in the information module 41 being accessed for the relevant bidder information.

Next, an auction interface module 43 can be provided which includes the graphical user interface 20 of fig. 2 and, upon the occurrence of various graphical events as previously described, the auction interface module causes the information module 41 to update its database details. Similarly, a lot database module 44 can be provided with an associated user interface for updating information about lots to be sold in an auction. A command and control module 45 can be provided for the overall control of software system 40 and can include a user interface for exercising this control in addition to an interface for the printing out of various reports or the like on printer 46. Further, the relevant displays 7-10 can be controlled from a display module 46 which takes information from the information module 41 for display on displays 7-10 and includes the relevant display drivers for display controller 3 (fig. 1).

The preferred embodiment has the significant advantages that during an auction process, the recording of bids is streamlined and the information is made available in many

different formats to an audience so as to increase the possible pace of repetitive interaction and cognition between that audience and auctioneer so as to increase the general levels of excitement and hence to often heighten the auction tension and increase the bidding prices.

Of course, a number of alternative embodiments would be readily apparent to those skilled in the art. For example, the displays 7-10 can alternate between the bid price and the word "sold" when a sale has been declared. The displays also could display various bid information or lot information by suitable programming of auction computer 2. Other options such as bar coding of all stock, displaying stock descriptions on the overhead monitors, the automatic printing of invoices at an auction's conclusion on printer 46 etc could be easily achieved.

It would be appreciated by a person skilled in the art that numerous variations and/or modifications may be made to the present invention as shown in the specific embodiments without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention as broadly described. The present embodiments are, therefore, to be considered in all respects to be illustrative and not restrictive.

CLAIMS

1. A computer and audio-visual system for conducting an auction comprising: a user interface for an auction controller to enter bid information into said computer system during said auction; a visual display connected to said computer system for displaying at least a current bidding price during said auction.

2. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said current bidding price is displayed in a number of currencies.

3. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said user interface includes a number of icons containing possible future bids for said auction.

4. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said user interface includes the display of bidding historical data for said auction.

5. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein said system contains a database of lots of objects to be auctioned and said user interface includes means for conducting an auction for each of said lots.

6. A system as claimed in claim 2, wherein said user interface includes icons to be activated when one of a group of events occurs, said events including the auction item being sold at the auction, the auction item being sold prior to the auction, the auction item being withdrawn by the seller, the auction item being passed in below a reserve, and an auction item having no bids from bidders at said auction.

7. A system substantially as herein before described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

The Patent Office

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Claims searched:	All	**Date of search:**	16 October 1997

Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:

UK Cl (Ed.O): G4A AUXF

Int Cl (Ed.6): G06F 17/60

Other: On-line: WPI

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage		Relevant to claims
X	EP 0716386 A2	(AUCNET). See whole document.	1 at least
X	EP 0628920 A1	(NIEAF-SMITT). See whole document.	1 at least
X	US 4789928	(FLEX JAPAN). See, for example, figure 16.	1 at least

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art.
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.